



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
May 27, 2021

## **BOATERS ENCOURAGED TO 'BE WHALE WISE' FOR ORCA ACTION MONTH**

FRIDAY HARBOR, WA. - After what felt like a very long winter, Puget Sound residents are excited to get out on the water and enjoy the beauty of our region. June is Orca Action Month, a time to celebrate and protect one of our region's most iconic marine mammals, the Southern Resident orcas. As we launch into summer, the San Juan County Marine Program would like to remind you of the simple things boaters can do to be a part of orca recovery.

Our resident killer whales have a unique social structure; they remain in matrilineal family groups, or pods, throughout their lives. The theme of this year's Orca Month -- "We Are Family" -- highlights not only this close family bond, but the connection shared between all living things in our region. Over the last year, we have rallied around the idea that *we are all in this together*, seeing our actions ripple out across a web of connection.

Laws and guidelines are in place to protect the endangered orcas as they hunt for food in our waters. Boaters can [Be Whale Wise](#) to ensure they are boating safely and acting as stewards on the water.

- **Know the Washington state laws**
  - Stay 300 yards from orcas on either side and 400 yards out of orca's path/in front and behind the whales
  - Go slow (<7 knots) within ½ mile of orcas and disengage engines if whales appear within 300 yards.
  
- **Give them space**
  - Observe the San Juan Island West Side Voluntary No-Boat Zone in critical feeding area
    - Extends from Mitchell Point to Cattle Point
    - ¼ mile offshore, ½ mile around Lime Kiln Point State Park
  
- **Follow the Be Whale Wise guidelines**
  - Use the **Whale Warning Flag** to alert boaters to the presence of whales and be aware of the flag when you're cruising the area.

- Refrain from fishing, where possible, within 1,000 metres or half mile of orcas and turn of fish finders and echo sounders when safe
- Don't pass between whales and the shoreline

You can view the full regulations and guidelines, as well as get a whale warning flag, at [www.BeWhaleWise.org](http://www.BeWhaleWise.org). Thank you for taking action and doing your part to help keep our waters safe.

*The **San Juan County Marine Program** is part of the County's **Environmental Resources Division**. They work to preserve fresh water resources, protect the marine environment, and coordinate recycling and solid waste throughout the County by implementing integrated projects and programs in partnership with others. **Be Whale Wise** is a partnership of governmental agencies, non-profits and other stakeholders in British Columbia and Washington state to research, implement and educate regarding laws and best vessel practices to protect the unique and fragile marine resources found in the area.*

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